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E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [KMDR](#) [KPAO](#) [OIIP](#) [OPRC](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PK](#)
SUBJECT: PAKISTAN MEDIA REACTION: MAY 15, 2009

Summary: Prime Minister Gilani's statement declaring that the "war on Taliban rebels will be won, no matter how long it takes" dominated headlines in all newspapers on Friday. His announcement of convening APC (All Parties Conference) on Monday also received front page display. Army Chief Kayani's visit to Swat received extensive media coverage. All dailies highlighted his resolve to "flush out militancy from the area." Alongside that story, all newspapers also reported that Army Chief Kayani would give an "in-camera briefing" on the military operation to the parliamentary leaders today (Friday). The English daily, "Dawn," highlighted Assistant Secretary Boucher's remarks that the Obama administration "does not favor a Congressional legislation that would link U.S. aid to Pakistan to the elimination of cross-border attacks into India." Some major dailies reported that Admiral Mullen "confirmed" at a Senate hearing that the U.S. had granted Pakistan's requests for surveillance support missions by U.S. drones.

Newspapers ran editorials on a hosts of subjects pertaining to Swat situation and other national issues. The liberal Urdu daily "Express," editorialized that the military "operation cannot move ahead properly until the international community steps forward to provide financial assistance to Pakistan." Commenting on the "politicking on refugees" the Lahore-based English language liberal daily, "Daily Times," noted that the "refugee problem is tough like all refugee problems anywhere else in the world. If the politicians stop undermining national unity at this stage, we are sure to win this war." The Peshawar-based Urdu daily, "Mashriq," advised the Punjab and Sindh administrations to "come forward and lend a hand to accommodate Malakand IDPs, as this is the time to provide humanitarian assistance generously." End Summary.

News Stories

"Win We Must, Win We Shall: Gilani; APC On Monday; COAS To Brief Leaders Today" "The News" (05/15)

"Prime Minister Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani on Thursday brushed aside concerns regarding the future of military operation in Swat and Malakand and expressed his firm belief that the Army would win the war against militancy. 'Militarily, we will win the war, but it will be unfortunate if we lose it politically, so we will also have to win the hearts and minds of the people,' the prime minister said while addressing the National Assembly in Islamabad on Thursday. Gilani announced convening of the All Parties Conference on Monday (May 18) and an in-camera briefing from Chief of the Army Staff General Ashfaq Parvez Kayani for the parliamentary leaders on Friday

(today)."

"Kayani Vows To Flush Out Militancy From Swat" "The News" (05/15)

"Security forces on Thursday claimed to have killed 54 militants, including three commanders, and suffered nine casualties during fighting in the Swat Valley. Also, on the same day, Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Ashfaq Parvez Kayani visited the valley and vowed to flush out militancy from the area."

"Attack On Army Base In Peochar Repulsed" "Dawn" (05/15)

"Security forces thwarted an attempt by militants to destroy their base in Peochar valley, a stronghold of Tehrik-i-Taliban Swat chief Maulana Fazlullah, the military spokesman Maj-Gen Athar Abbas said on Thursday. Answering a question, the military spokesman said that no external power had any role in the planning, execution and financing of the operation."

"124 Militants Killed In Swat; Deadly Battle For Mingora Looms" "The Nation" (05/15)

"Artillery batteries shelled suspected militant hideouts in Swat and Lower Dir, with the military claiming to have killed around 124 militants in the last 24 hours. Residents trapped in Swat's main city of Mingora fear a deadly battle for the town looms, saying that armed Taliban have mined roads and dug trenches around up to 200,000 civilians encircled by the troops."

"Nine Militants Killed In Darra" "The News" (05/15)

"Nine militants were killed and 12 others were arrested in search operation carried out by the security forces in Mulakhel area of Darra Adamkhel on Thursday."

"Darra Taliban Threaten To Target Commercial Jets" "Dawn" (05/15)

"The spokesman for Darra Taliban told 'Dawn' by telephone from an undisclosed location that they had set the deadline of June 14 for the government to stop military operation in the region and withdraw all troops. In case their demand was not met by the deadline they would start shooting down commercial planes travelling through the air space in the region, he added."

"Three Soldiers, 5 Militants Killed In NWA" "The News" (05/15)

"Security forces on Thursday killed five militants in the North Waziristan Agency after a military convoy was targeted with improvised explosive device (IED) in the Pir Killay area, in which three soldiers were killed and four others sustained injuries."

"Nine Policemen Hurt In D.I. Khan Blasts" "The Nation" (05/15)

"At least nine police officers were injured in three blasts in Dera Ismail Khan late Thursday, officials said."

"Militants Torch Police Post In Battagram" "Dawn" (05/15)

"Militants ransacked and then set on fire a police check-post in Battagram district in the small hours of Thursday. The check-post was established at Batta Mori to restrict activities of militants in the district."

"School Blown Up In Peshawar" "Dawn" (05/15)

"Suspected militants on Thursday blew up a government girls' primary school in suburbs of the provincial capital, a source in the police department said."

"More Than 834,000 Displaced, Says UN" "Dawn" (05/15)

"More than 834,000 civilians have fled recent fighting between security forces and the Taliban in the northwest of the country, the UN Refugee Chief said on Thursday."

"\$5 Billion Needed For Rehabilitation Of IDPs: UN" "The Nation" (05/15)

"UNDP Disaster Reduction Advisor Zubair Murshid told a private TV channel that the rehabilitation process could take two to five years and added that over \$5 billion is needed for complete rehabilitation of the IDPs of Malakand and elsewhere."

"U.S. Opposes Linking Aid To Cross-Border Attacks" "Dawn" (05/15)

"The Obama administration does not favor a Congressional legislation that would link U.S. aid to Pakistan to the elimination of cross-border attacks into India, a senior U.S. official said on Thursday. 'We do not want restrictions to make it impossible to achieve the goals that we all share,' Assistant Secretary of State Richard Boucher told a briefing in Washington."

"U.S. Senate Panel Approves Emergency Aid For Pakistan" "Dawn" (05/15)

"The U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee on Thursday approved a \$91.3 billion measure to fund the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan through September 30 and to provide emergency aid to the Pakistan government. The Senate measure also includes about \$900 million in economic and security aid for Pakistan which is battling militant Taliban fighters spilling over its border with Afghanistan. The House bill has about \$1 billion for Pakistan."

"Gates Urges Congress To Approve \$700 Million For Pakistan" (05/15)

"Stressing that Pakistan needs both economic and military assistance to uproot militancy, Defense Secretary Robert Gates on Thursday urged Congress to approve \$700 million for Pakistan Counterinsurgency Capability Fund (PCCF) contained in defense budget for the fiscal year 2010."

"U.S. Senators Link Pakistan Aid To Focus On Extremists" "The News" (05/15)

"Senators on Thursday linked the U.S. aid to Pakistan's denouncing and battling extremists, who had threatened security in its northwest and displaced hundreds of thousands of refugees. At issue is about \$700 million that the Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman Carl Levin, a Democrat, said would, in part, pay to help Pakistan fight the insurgents. 'If Pakistan makes this fight against the extremists their own fight, then the U.S. should be willing to help Pakistan achieve a more stable and secure future,' Levin told Defence Secretary Robert Gates and Admiral Mike Mullen, Joint Chiefs Chairman, at a Senate hearing on the military's budget for the next year."

"Modalities Of U.S. Aid Not Yet Worked Out: FO" "The News" (05/15)

"Pakistan says that Islamabad and Washington need to distinguish between conditionalities, benchmarks, monitoring and overseeing the use of aid and assistance, which Pakistan will receive. 'We do not know at this point in time about those details. It is better to wait and see how things evolve,' the spokesman at the Foreign Office told the weekly media conference."

"U.S. To share Drone Data, Not Technology, With Pakistan" "The News" (05/15)

"The United States has taken the unprecedented step of sharing with Islamabad surveillance data collected by drones flying over Pakistan, the Top U.S. military officer said on Thursday. Admiral Mike Mullen, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, confirmed that Pakistan had requested surveillance support missions by U.S. unmanned aircraft at a Senate hearing."

"Zardari Urges Delivery Of Aid Pledges" "Dawn" (05/15)

"President Asif Ali Zardari on Thursday called for a prompt delivery of the pledges made by the international community for addressing the challenges faced by Pakistan. Discussing economic assistance to Pakistan with the British Secretary for International Development Douglas Alexander in London, the President expressed gratitude for the UK's development assistance for Pakistan amounting to 665 million pounds sterling over four years."

"No Transit Trade Rights To India: FO" "The Nation" (05/15)

"Pakistan on Thursday said it had not granted any transit right to India for its trade goods as it was against the national interests. The details have yet to be finalized and Pakistan will not agree to any provision or arrangement that is not in its national interests, the Foreign Office spokesman, Abdul Basit said in his weekly press briefing."

"Pak-Afghan Accord To Improve Border Control System" "The News" (05/15)

"Pakistan and Afghanistan on Thursday agreed to improve the border control system, import 1000MW of electricity from Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan with an estimated cost of \$750 million and establish rail links to boost regional trade, while Addressing a joint press conference along with Afghanistan's Minister for Economics Jalil Shamas, Minister of State for Economic Affairs Hina Rabbani Khar said."

Editorials/Op-eds

"Swat Operation And The International Community's Responsibility," an editorial in liberal Urdu daily "Express" (cir. 25,000) (05/15)

"It would have been appropriate had the U.S. given Pakistan Army full control over the drones rather than partial control. This would not only have helped the security forces in the progress of the operation, but would also have helped Pakistan government control issues arising from U.S. strikes. If the U.S. administration starts thinking on these lines even now, there can be an improvement in the situation."

"Politicking On Refugees," an editorial in the Lahore-based liberal English language daily "Daily Times" (cir. 10,000) (05/15)

"The truth is that the refugee crisis after the military operation has created an opportunity for the policy of 'isolate and oust.'... Pakistan is not fighting for American dollars, and no one is after its nuclear weapons; it is fighting the war of its survival beyond the point of 'negotiating' with the terrorists. And the refugee problem is tough like all refugee problems anywhere else in the world. If the politicians stop undermining national unity at this stage, we are sure to win this war."

"Problems Evolved From The Military Operation," an editorial in the Peshawar-based Urdu-language daily "Mashriq" (cir. 55,000) (05/15)

"The Punjab and Sindh administrations must come forward and lend a hand to accommodate Malakand IDPs, as this is the time to provide humanitarian assistance generously. Our rulers must visit the camps of the IDPs by themselves to provide consolation to the affected people and monitor the relief activities, or else their grievances and deprivations will cause another kind of extremism against the government."

"Precision Strikes," an editorial in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (05/15)

"A Los Angeles Times report tells of the U.S. government agreeing to undertake Predator strikes in limited collaboration with Pakistani military.... While the arrangement would help the U.S. attack the targets of its choice in Pakistan, blame for the consequences of any misfire would be borne by the Pakistan army. The avowed arrangement hardly suits Pakistan."

"Minimizing Collateral Damage," an editorial in the Islamabad-based rightist English daily "Pakistan Observer" (cir. 5,000) (05/15)

"It is understood that in an Army operation no one can eliminate the chances of collateral damage due to obvious reasons.... Similarly, despite risks involved, the strategy adopted by the Army with regard to Pechor where heli-borne troops were dropped to take action against men of Maulana Fazlullah is the right approach to avoid collateral damage and engaging militants. We would also expect the local people, who are still living in their areas, to cooperate with the law enforcing agencies in identifying and locating militants so

that the operation is brought to an early end."

"A Welcome Concern," an editorial in the Lahore-based liberal English daily "The Post" (cir. 5,000) (05/15)

"The order requiring of precision attacks is a welcome move as it will minimize collateral damage of civilians. This is important when the militants are using the civilian population as human shield. This new strategy will help achieve the desired results in the troubled areas of Swat. The resulting collateral damage, even if inevitable, brings grist to the grind mills of propaganda, working for the religious zealots."

"Where's The National Spirit?," an editorial in the Karachi-based center-left independent national English daily "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (05/15)

"Citizens across the country who have so far not been directly affected by the Taliban's activities must come to the aid of their brethren.... The issue of the refugees must be delinked from ethnic and political concerns since these undermine societal solidarity and further intensify the misery of the IDPs. As citizens of Pakistan, the refugees have a right to protection and assistance offered by not just the state and but also fellow citizens.... Most importantly, perhaps, civil society must lobby with the government and its institutions for a successful, speedy end to the military operation and a clean-up of militant-infested areas. The government's writ must be extended immediately to all its territories, for slow or evasive action against the insurgents may not only give the latter time to regroup, it may also encourage other militant organizations with intentions to spread anarchy."

"Entire Nation Should Participate In Relief Operation," an editorial in the leading mass circulation centrist Urdu daily "Jang" (cir. 300,000) (05/15)

"We must not overlook the risk that the anti-Pakistan elements can exploit the miseries and grievances of the IDPs. The government ministers must come forward to help these destitute rather than doing just lip service. Beside using Pakistan Army for the arrangements of these IDPs, the government should encourage the religious groups for this purpose, who have vast experience to their credit of making arrangements of mass gatherings."

"Beggars And Choosers," an editorial in the centrist national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (05/15)

"Reports say that among the items sent to the IDPs have been old, quite obviously dirty and in some cases badly damaged clothes. These have been cast aside with considerable anger. The people forced out of their homes are after all not beggars. Most have lived in dignity, even if their earnings are limited, for most of their lives. They need now too to be treated with respect. Pride is the one thing they still retain. It must not be snatched away from them through insensitivity or a desire to show off how much is being given away."

"Military Operation And Protecting The Local Populace," an editorial in the second-largest, center-right nationalist Urdu daily "Nawa-i-Waqt" (cir. 150,000) (05/15)

"The government should order that only those elements be targeted during the military operation that is working against national interests and those with links to foreign powers. The U.S. should fight its war on its own, we should only eliminate our enemies."

"Battle For Hearts And Mind," an op-ed by Sultan M. Hali in the Islamabad-based rightist English daily "Pakistan Observer" (cir. 5,000) (05/15)

"The war could rage for months even years, with a nearly invisible enemy, using highly sophisticated weaponry and communication, merging in the shadows. Under these circumstances, it must be assured that the IDPs will be dealt with fairly and with compassion.... Before the whispering campaign becomes a din and drowns saner elements in its crescendo, the battle for hearts and mind must be planned and executed in such a manner that the IDPs themselves vouch for the legitimacy and need for the military action

against the miscreants."

"Look After the Displaced Persons," an op-ed by Dr. Ijaz Ahsan in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (05/15)

"If hearts and minds have to be won, the IDPs will have to be looked after as never before. \$1.9 billion are being earmarked by the U.S. along for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of the IDPs and also of the areas they come from. This is a colossal amount... The government of the day owes them all possible efforts to ameliorate their lot, to look after them, to urgently create conditions for their return to their homes, and to ensure prompt resettlement and reconstruction in their areas. The nation is watching. The rulers better put their act together."

"Hope Among The Ruins," an op-ed by Ayaz Amir in the centrist national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (05/15)

"There is no doubt that the operation in Buner was hastily undertaken. With the right preparations much of the present misery and disorder we are seeing could have been avoided.... But the basic premise remains that there was no alternative to taking on the Taliban. They were a threat to the state. People who still think otherwise should take the trouble of visiting Buner and seeing things for themselves. Now the most pressing national task is to back the army and ease the pain of the refugees, and -- this being very important -- undertake measures to reduce the pain of our brothers and sisters in Balochistan. There is no point in fighting for Swat if we are eventually to lose Balochistan."

"A Quagmire?," an op-ed by Masooda Bano in the centrist national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (05/15)

"Having millions of displaced people as a result of a war, where the target is unclear and in which the enemy is ill-defined, will force Pakistan into supporting a civil war, which will only become messier with time.... Rather than plunging the country into a war which has no sense of direction, the state needs to put its act together and make a serious effort to understand what forces are strengthening the militants in Malakand division.... If they don't have popular support, and the state is determined to quell them then logically how they could have patrolled the streets of Swat and taken over government offices without some influential forces supporting them."

"Decisive Operation In Swat," an op-ed by Col. Ghulam Sarwar (R) in the Islamabad-based rightist English daily "Pakistan Observer" (cir. 5,000) (05/15)

"There is an urgent need to explain to the masses that the task to overcome the Taliban may take time. The Taliban have entrenched themselves in the mountain areas over a period of time, so the Armed forces shall have devise necessary plan to eradicate their influences.... In the end, we would suggest that the army should see to it that it does not get sucked into a prolonged fight against civilians. There is a need to cordon off the entire Swat Valley and also routes of escape from the militants and blocked, otherwise, they would create trouble in FATA and the neighboring areas."

"The Battle for Pakistan," an op-ed by Najmuddin A. Shaikh in the Lahore-based liberal English language daily "Daily Times" (cir. 10,000) (05/15)

"It would be wise for us, the overwhelming majority of the people of Pakistan who want to see the country become the moderate and tolerant Islamic state that the Quaid had envisioned, to demand that the current campaign against the Taliban be pursued relentlessly. It will take time, and it will be testing not only for our Pashtun brothers who are bearing the brunt of the present conflict, but for all of us. The armed forces are now committed, one hopes, to the elimination of the military threat. It is civil society that has to erode and then eliminate the ideological threat that has been allowed to grow over the last thirty years."

"Imran Khan's Strange Politics," an op-ed by Shafqat Mahmood in the centrist national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (05/15)

"He (Imran) has just one mantra that this is America's fault, America's fault, America ... etc. America has contributed to it but is that the only problem we confront?... In this difficult time for the country, he is on the wrong side of history. No one doubts that American presence in Afghanistan has seriously contributed to our troubles. But, we must also remember that barbarian hordes linked to Al Qaeda also have designs on our country and threaten our way of life. We have no choice but to fight them. Imran must stand by his people and the armed forces. He should rise above his prejudices and help in the fight for Pakistan."

"How Can They Win Friends?," an op-ed by Ayesha Siddiqa in the Karachi-based center-left independent national English daily "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (05/15)

"The world is worried about increasing Talibanization in Pakistan. It is concerned that this phenomenon might reach other countries too. Hence expatriate populations are looked upon with suspicion and blamed for all ills in foreign countries. However, it is important to recognize that these states are equally responsible for creating an environment that propels people towards aggression or a certain ideology."
Patterson